The *Qin* Revival in Mainland China

Zhao Yuxing

Abstract

Since antiquity, the seven-stringed zither known as the *qin* has always been a very important instrument across China, its long history linked to its prestige among the Chinese scholarly classes. However, the impact of westernization led to its declined in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though it was kept alive by a handful of scholars and musicians up until the onset of the Cultural Revolution, when its performance was forced underground, given its associations with Confucianist ideologies. In the past thirty years, the *qin*, along with traditional Chinese cultural generally, has undergone a rapid revival across Mainland China. By drawing on ethnomusicological models of revival movements, this article looks at how the current *qin* revival has promoted the construction of cultural memory around the *qin*, and how this memory is being articulated to the lives of *qin* players in China today. The investigation shows how a range of memories is being generated by different social groups with distinct cultural and personal agendas.

Keywords: *qin*, music revival, cultural memory, Chinese traditional culture, contemporary China

Resumo

Desde a antiguidade, a cítara de sete cordas conhecida como *qin* tem sido um instrumento de grande importância na China, sendo seu longo histórico associado ao seu prestígio entre as classes de estudiosos da região. No entanto, o impacto da ocidentalização a partir do final do século XIX levou ao seu declínio, sendo que apenas alguns estudiosos e músicos deram continuidade ao seu cultivo, até o início da Revolução Cultural Chinesa, período em que o instrumento não podia mais ser tocado abertamente, dadas as suas associações com as ideologias confucionistas. Nos últimos trinta anos, o *qin*, junto com a cultura milenar chinesa de modo geral, tem vivido un grande renascimento por toda a República Popular da China. Partindo dos modelos etnomusicológicos referentes aos movimentos de revitalização musical, este artigo avalia como a atual revitalização do *qin* vem promovendo a construção de uma memória cultural em torno do *qin* e como esta memória se articula com as vidas das pessoas que tocam o instrumento na China hoje. A investigação demonstra como uma variedade de memórias está sendo gerada por diferentes grupos sociais, de acordo com os seus diferentes interesses culturais e pessoais.

Palavras-Chave: *qin*, revitalização musical, memória cultural, cultura chinesa milenar, China contemporânea

The *qin*, or *guqin*, a seven-stringed zither, is one of the oldest stringed instruments in China, dating back thousands of years (VAN GULIK, 1969 [1940]:vii). With the rise of westernization, the *qin* almost disappeared entirely by the early twentieth century; by the on-set of the 1950s, there were no more than one hundred *qin* players in all of China. The instrument declined even further during the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976), when many of the remaining performers were not allowed to play their instruments in public, because the *qin* repertoire was considered part of the old tradition which some members of the new government wished to eradicate. When the Cultural Revolution ended, China experienced a reawakening of its cultural heritage, and the *qin* was among the musical traditions to be fostered within the broader sphere of Chinese cultural revival, partly, no doubt, because it is a relatively

easy instrument to play. Just as the revival responds to current concerns amongst large sectors of the Chinese population to rediscover their national heritage, the revivalists have adapted the practices surrounding the *qin* to their lives today. By investigating the *qin* revival, I am less interested in the actual history of the instrument than in looking at the way in which cultural memory has been constructed around the *qin*, and how this memory is being articulated to the lives of *qin* players in China today.

Music Revivals

Music revivals, as Tamara Livingston has noted, in her classic model of the revival process, "can be defined as social movements which strive to 'restore' a musical system believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past for the benefit of contemporary society" (LIVINGSTON, 1999:66). Music revivals, therefore, are spheres for constructing cultural memory; that is, they are settings in which a group jointly engages in recreating an imagined collective past. As Tore Tvarnø Lind has put it,

> Music revival is a cross-temporal activity, a present-tense engagement with history that wishes to influence the future. Music revival is based on imaginary work: on how a group of revivalists imagines the past, and how it is expressed and embodied by assigning specific values to the revived practice and identifying with it (LIND, 2012, p.27).

According to Lind this process of imagining usually comprises of three phase: 1) the awakening of memory; 2) the selecting of particular dimensions of this memory; and 3) the construction of a "new memory". The "awakening", which sets the revival in motion, gets underway when a group of people is compelled to rearticulate their identities with a common past and embarks upon a mission to identify the musical traditions of the ancestors. As Eric Hobsbawm has observed, however, "history" itself cannot be understood as "the past", but rather as that which has been "selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized" by those who have kept the records of the past (1983, p.13). Music and the social world surrounding musical activities have been recorded in a wide range of ways across the ages, including literary descriptions, paintings and other iconographic representations, musical scores involving various forms of notation, oral narratives passed down the generations, and more recently through such technologies as audio recordings, photography, film and video among other media. Particularly with regard to musics associated with the ruling classes in literate societies, there can be extensive records of the musical activities of different historical periods. In some cases, small numbers of practitioners have up-held a dying tradition, and the knowledge of these tradition-bearers can form the foundation for the revival movement.

Regardless of the resources revivalists have to hand, the revival itself takes place in the present. Just as the ancestors recorded their musical lives in accordance with the values of their era, contemporary revivalists are motivated by the values of their time. "Remembering the past," Lind reminds us, "is a social act that always already belongs to the present" (LIND, 2012, p.28). As the music of the past is reconstructed, it is repositioned within contemporary society, a process that involves its adaptation to the new purposes to which it is being put (HOBSBAWM, 1983, p.5).

As Livingston (1999) has indicated, the repositioning of the revived material is typically propelled by ideological concerns. Michael Brocken, for instance, has shown how folk music revivals create "a kind of symbolic substance with not only aesthetic

but also iconic and political significance" (BROCKEN, 2003, p.2). In Norway, nationalism has reinforced a tradition-oriented aesthetics that developed over many centuries; this is reflected in the country's fiddle revival, which employs "folk materials as national symbols" (GOETTZEN, 1997, p.11). Kimberley DaCosta Holden contends that the sudden emergence of the *ranchos folclóricos*, or local folk dance ensembles, in Portugal after the 1974 is best viewed against the complex social backdrop of the post-revolutionary context, in which Portuguese society experienced dramatic liberalization; moreover, Portugal had recently lost its colonial empire, the country had joined the European Union, and its population was altered by waves of inward and outward immigration (HOLTON, 2005, p.199).

In China cultural revivals became increasingly visible following the end of the Cultural Revolution, particularly among China's many minority ethnic groups.[1] Ethnic groups in southwest China, such as the Miao, the Yi, the Dong, the Shui, the Buyi and the Tujia, engaged in the practice of *nuo*, a complex of shamanistic beliefs and rituals structured around music, dance and drama. During the Cultural Revolution, "all *nuo* rituals were prohibited and *nuo* specialists were forced to hand over their *nuo* masks, painting, books, tools and ritual gowns. If a *nuo* specialist did not comply with the prohibition, he could be seen as a class enemy and ran the risk of death" (LI, 1998, p.76-80). In the 1980s, however, *nuo* came to be lauded as the most important tradition that distinguished these minority groups from the Han majority; even the local officials of the Nationality Affairs Committees and Cultural Bureaux began to pay more attention on *nuo*, redefining it as a "valuable cultural tradition" and "national heritage". This new orientation allowed the *nuo* performance groups that had been banned during the Cultural Revolution to re-emerge, and they were joined by many new groups, such that *nuo* performance has become common throughout southwest China. As Li Lan[2] noted, "With the revival of *nuo* among the Tujia, an emblem of ethnic identity was created" (1998, p.76-80). In the early 1990s, the Naxi began reviving the *baisha xiyue*, an ancient musical genre common to this ethnic group, which had died out during the first half of the twentieth century (REES, 1995).

The Han, the largest ethnic group in China, comprising 90% of the population, has also been involved in the revival of its cultural legacy. The end of the Cultural Revolution and the coming of the third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978 brought a period of political opening, and western culture was making its way back into the country. The growth in industry promoted economic prosperity in China, and a huge demand for cultural consumption emerged. Educational levels increased, and greater knowledge about Chinese history and the nation's cultural legacies became available to ever-larger numbers of people. Thus, alongside the demand for western-style consumption patterns, many urban Chinese began to re-examine the millennial traditional culture of China. Compared with modern (western) culture, Chinese traditions were now being sought after as a way of reasserting a Chinese identity. Moreover, the Cultural Revolution had targeted the "old traditions", which often were those that had been especially cherished for their embodiment of ancient Chinese philosophies, values, arts and skills. Against this background, the memory of China's past magnificence was awakened. The Chinese

[1] The Chinese government began a project to identify the nation's minority ethnic groups in 1950; by 1979, 56 different ethnic groups had been identified, though there are still a number of unrecognized ethnic groups in the country.

[2] According to Chinese conventions, proper names are usually presented with the family name first, followed by the given name(s). This article uses the Chinese conventional order, except in cases in which the person in question is well known in the West and has adopted the Western convention.

remembered a time in which their country had been the most powerful in the world, especially during the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) and the Tang Dynasty (618–907). The national culture of those eras was viewed as being especially advanced, deserving, therefore, to be remembered today.

As a quintessentially Han instrument, the *qin* has held a special place within the Chinese cultural revival movement. The *qin* and its repertoire were closely integrated into Han Chinese philosophy (YI, 2004, p. 240–266), particularly Confucianism and Daoism (JONES, 1996, p.377), and to the various arts linked to scholarship, officialdom and the aristocracy, such as painting, calligraphy, literature, medicine and other traditional forms of expression and knowledge. In effect, it is perhaps best to view the instrument within a wider "*qin* culture", in which the cultivation of the *qin* involved engagement with a range of arts and knowledge systems. In *The Book of Rites* (*Li ji*), an early Han Confucianist text that drew heavily on Taoism, it is claimed that: "A gentleman does not part with his *qin* or *se*[3] without good reason."

Given its age, existing literature on the *qin* is vast, whilst, in light of the revival movement, academic publications on the instrument have increase significantly over the past decade. For the most part, this research has been directed toward the production of handbooks for performers as well as material on the history of the instrument, its repertoire and past musicians. More recently publications with an ethnomusicological stance have started to emerge, and scholars have begun to turn their attention to the ways in which the *qin* has been adapted to contemporary China. In his MA dissertation, for instance, Xu Hengzhe (2011) discusses the *qin* in modern Chinese society and the connection between *qin* art and contemporary concerns; he then analyses the dynamic relations in the preservation, promotion, and development of the instrument. Similarly, Hu Bin, in his recent PhD thesis, "Modern Identity and the Cultural Representation of the *Qin*" (2009), looks at changes in *qin* culture over the past century. He notes how the *qin* has been adapted to contemporary China in light of the rise of national identity, modernity, and globalization, which have turned the *qin* into a form of Chinese "mass culture".

In this article I aim to assess the revival of the *qin* in relation to the "memory" being constructed and disseminated about the instrument. Drawing on existing publications as well as my own investigation of historical documents, I will look at how this material has informed contemporary practices in the revival. Furthermore, I will be looking at how a "new memory" is being constructed around the *qin* to adapt it to contemporary Chinese life.

The fieldwork for this project was undertaken in Lanzhou, where I grew up and participated in the local *qin* revival movement. As the capital city of Gansu Province, Lanzhou is the political, economic and cultural centre of this north western region, and historically it stood at the boundaries of Han culture. Although Gansu Province, particularly its eastern regions, is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization, it remained relatively undeveloped, when compared with some of the south eastern provinces of China. This situation also affected the development of the *qin* in the region, even though there are signs of its early presence in the region. Indeed, the instrument is played by some of the Flying Apsaras in the Dunhuang frescos, which means that its performance was witnessed by ancient painters in the region nearly 2000 years ago. Furthermore, there are some *qin* tablatures published in the Qing Dynasty that are still stored in the Gansu Provincial Library. Despite this, no

[3] The *se* is another ancient Chinese zither.

major *qin* schools or societies developed in the region, nor did it host any significant *qin* activities in the early twentieth century. Yet since the turn of the millennium, local people were attracted to the *qin* with the same enthusiasm as revivalists in other parts of Mainland China, though, given its marginal location in the country, the *qin* revival in Lanzhou was somewhat delayed, in comparison to other parts of China.

The 'Awakening'

For thousands of years up until the end of the 19th century, scholars contributed to the development of the *qin*, composing repertoires, creating playing styles, developing instrument building techniques, writing monographs and so on. However, the tradition of *qin* performance and research declined throughout the twentieth century, leaving professional *qin* performers with very few opportunities to play their instruments.[4] Since there were so few performers, *qins* became very cheap.[5] The general public had all but forgotten that the instrument existed. In fact, in the early 1990s, very few people, if asked, would have associated the word "*qin*" with a seven-stringed zither.

Despite the difficulties *qin* performers faced throughout the twentieth century, a handful of scholars valiantly persisted in keeping the tradition alive. These people, which Livingston (1999) might have referred to as "core revivalists", engaged in research and established institutions that would serve as a foundation for the fully fledged revival of the instrument that got underway following the end of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese scholars have identified three periods linked to *qin* performance in the twentieth century: the Republican period, the early stage of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the Post-Cultural Revolution period.

The *Qin* during the Republic

During the Republican period (1911-1949), Mainland China was governed primarily by the Kuomintang, or the Chinese Nationalist Party. During this period several *qin* societies were formed and a number of *qin* symposiums and gatherings were held which played an important part in ensuring the instrument was not completely forgotten. On 18 October 1919, for instance, 33 players from Yangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou made their way to Yiyuan, Suzhou, to attend an event that came to be known as the Yiyuan Gathering. This event was followed by a symposium in Shanghai in 1920, which involved over 130 players from different *qin* schools from across the country. Like other such events, this symposium allowed participants to "exchange ideas and music, identify their schools of playing, present new compositions, and discuss old collections in ch'in handbooks. Later, to commemorate this symposium they published a book consisting of the names of the delegates, the schools to which they belonged, ch'in essays and discussions" (LIANG, 1972, p.126).

It was also during this period that the *Mei'an* School, which would become the most influential *qin* society in China, was established. In 1917, Wang Yanqing, a *qin* master of the *Zhucheng* School, started teaching at the National Nanjing Advanced Normal School; he was the first person to teach the *qin* in a Chinese institution of higher education. Wang died in 1921, and in 1929, two of his students, Xu Lisun and

[4] LI Xiangting, now a the top-level *qin* master, had to play single-stringed instruments in the 1960s in order to survive (PAN, 1986, p.11).

[5] In the early 1970s, a *qin* made in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) called "Flowing Spring" cost just 40 *yuan* (in the 1970s, a factory worker earned 14 *yuan* per month).

Shao Sen, founded the *Mei'an* Society[6] in Nantong and then edited the manuscript *qin* tutor he had written, publishing it in 1931. They called the handbook "*Mei'an*", in order to memorialize their teacher, as this was the name of the campus at which he taught the *qin* as well as the name he used to refer to himself. According to Fredric Lieberman, *Mei'an* Qin *Pu* "is the most popular and widely used contemporary handbook (or tutor) for the Ch'in" (LIEBERMAN, 1983, p.3).[7]

On 1 March 1936, Zha Fuxi, Zhang Ziqian and Peng Zhiqing set up the Jinyu Qin Society in Suzhou. This association was structured around monthly gatherings in which *qin* players aimed to promote *qin* music to the wider pubic in order to increase its popularity and recognition. Because many members of the society were from Shanghai, a branch of the society was organized there eight months later. A journal for the Society called *Jinyu* was published in 1937, which consisted of photos of famous *qin* masters and their biographies, compositions for the *qin*, articles and reports on *qin* theory and other items of interest to *qin* players. Despite its founders' plans to see the journal published regularly, only one issue was ever produced, due to the on-set of the Sino-Japanese War. Liang praised the efforts of the Society, stating: "It represented a grand reunion of ch'in players…. [It] preserved and gave continuity to the old ways and searched for new arenas for the art of the ch'in"; the Society was responsible for "a climax in ch'in activity during the modern period"; it pioneered "a unique avenue within Chinese culture of promoting ch'in music" (LIANG, 1972, p.127). A number of other *qin* societies were also founded during the Republic, such as the Yuanyin Society in Taiyuan, the Guangling Society in Yangzhou, and the Yinyin Society in Changsha, all of which were regional associations. Because of the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War, however, this incipient effort at reviving the *qin* had to be suspended.

The *Qin* in the People's Republic of China

From 1949 to 1966, Mainland China was facing a period of post-war reconstruction, and some *qin* scholars drew on this *zeitgeist* in their efforts to reignite an interest in the instrument. Regarding the *Mei'an* School, for example, Xu Lisun recalled that he met with other *qin* players and kept on teaching students after 1949, as did Ling Qizhen, who trained two very promising performers, Lu Jielan and Shao Panshi. New institutions for the promotion of the *qin* were founded, and again the organization of symposiums played a part in ensuring some activity around the instrument took place. In 1954, for instance, the Beijing Qin Research Association was founded. Members of this institution, including Yang Yinliu, Zha Fuxi, Guan Pinghu among others, were active in promoting the instrument. In 1956, Zha Fuxi, Xu Jian and Wand Di set about organizing a network of players from across Mainland China. They were able to survey a total of 87 *qin* players, among whom they were able to record 262 tunes. During this investigation, some rare *qin* tablature manuscripts were uncovered, including *Zhe Yin Shi Zi Qin Pu* and *Qin Yuan Xin*

[6] A *qin* society is different from a *qin* school, in that *qin* schools are far more formal institutions organized by *qin* masters, while *qin* societies are smaller, local organizations which can be founded and run by amateurs.

[7] After 1949, the *Mei'an* School continued to develop. In the 1950s, Wu Zonghan, who studied with Xu Lisun, opened a branch of the school in Hong Kong; in the 1960s, he taught in Taiwan; when he went to America in 1970, the *Mei'an* School spread there. In Mainland China, there are five main organizations declaring that they belong to the *Mei'an* School; they are: Mei'an Qin Society in Nantong, Qin Research Institution in Nantong, Mengxi Qin Society in Zhenjiang, Mei'an Society (set up by Liu Chicheng) in Hefei and Mei'an Society (set up by Wang Dan) in Hefei (Shi, 2010, p.97).

Zhuan. The Association also embarked on projects that involved the reproduction of manuscripts and material of interest to *qin* players, such as *Cun Jian Gu Qin Qu Pu Ji Lan*, published in 1958; *Biographies of Qin Players (Li Dai Qin Ren Zhuan)*, published in 1961; *Qin Qu Ji Cheng*, which was published in 1963 by Zhonghua Book Company among other works. Members were encouraged to write and publish new works about the *qin*, such as studies of finger techniques (*Gu Zhi Fa Kao, Cun Jian Zhi Fa Ji Lan* etc.) and other articles, and they were also encouraged to revive tunes contained in such ancient documents as *Guang Ling San, Hu Jia, You Lan, Li Sao*. These investigations of the *qin* led to intense performance activity. In 1959, a concert based on works contained in *Hu Jia Shi Ba Pai* was held to showcase tunes that had fallen out of the repertoire. Xu Jian claimed that, just in 1954, nearly twenty *qin* performances were held (XU, 1981p. 35), all sponsored by the Beijing Qin Research Association. In 1956 the *qin* started to be taught in the Central Conservatory of Music and in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Some of the professional *qin* players trained in these institutions, such as Li Xiangting and Dai Xiaolian, would later be recognized nationally for their performance skills.

Just as a new space for the *qin* was being forged in China, activities came to an abrupt halt with the on-set of the Cultural Revolution, which dictated Chinese cultural policy for a decade, starting in 1966. One of its central policies was "the destruction of the 'four oldnesses' (old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits)" (LI, 1998, p.52). The *qin* was unambiguously seen as an embodiment of these "oldnesses": it was strongly linked to Confucianism, a prime target of the Cultural Revolution; the *qin* and its music were identified as forms of traditional culture with close ties to other dimensions of ancient Chinese traditions; the *qin* societies and schools cultivated old customs. Any activity linked to the *qin* would now have to be stopped or removed from public view.

The *Qin* after the Cultural Revolution

When the Cultural Revolution ended, the ban on religious practice and on the performance of a variety of traditional cultural expressions was lifted, and from 1978 onwards Mainland China began to reform and institute a policy of political and cultural opening. In the new social environment, some activities involving the *qin* were gradually resumed. Among the first signs of renewal was the reopening of the *qin* societies. The Jinyu Society, for example, resumed its activities in 1980; Zhang Ziqian was elected proprietor of the organization, and his home in Shanghai became its headquarters. According to Cheng Gonliang, every afternoon, after Zhang's nap, members came together to play the *qin* at his house. In December, 1980, the *Mei'an* Society was reopened, and Chen Xinyuan became its proprietor; in 1989, the Society celebrated its 60th anniversary. The Beijing Qin Research Association resumed the editing of material for the *qin*, particularly old and new repertoires, and in 1983 it put out volume II of *Gu qin Qu Ji*. In 1978 Xu Jian, one of the association's key members, had completed his manuscript, *History of the Qin*, and this work too was published by the association in 1982. These two volumes are still the most widely used works on the history and practice of the *qin*.

Soon a new type of institution emerged which came to be referred to as the "*qin* club"; at these local institutions amateurs could learn to play the instrument. Throughout the country *qin* societies were founded, and qualified *qin* teachers took up posts in music schools across China. *Qin* societies and clubs also sprang up in many

universities. These diverse organizations trained countless *qin* players, both amateurs and professionals.

While in the past the *qin* was associated primarily with literati and officials as well as with some court professional performers, today anyone can play the *qin* as long as they can afford to buy an instrument and pay for lessons (which can be quite expensive). There is now easy access to published material on the *qin*; public performances of the *qin* are frequent occurrences across China; and the instrument can be heard regularly on radio and television as well as on the internet.

The combined effect of these efforts has meant that the *qin* has gained ever greater visibility within the country at large. In Lanzhou, many *qin* enthusiast began to find a number of ways to study the *qin*. Before 2000, there were only a few teachers who taught the *qin* in Lanzhou, or even in the whole of Gansu province. Those wishing to learn how to play it often bought instructional DVDs by famous *qin* masters; others made frequent trips for lessons to other cities, such as Shanghai and Xi'an. For over a decade now Professor Yun has been teaching the *qin* at the Northwest University for Nationalities, and she has trained a number of students who are now teaching in the region. Since many amateurs in Lanzhou, as elsewhere in China, like to gather together to teach and play with one another, they set up *qin* clubs. They can be found in universities – there are *qin* clubs at the Lanzhou University and the Northwest Normal University – as well as in schools, social clubs and other civil institutions. I began studying the *qin* in 2004 with Prof Yun, and once I could play with sufficient competence, I began teaching some of my friends to play as well. As a *qin* lover, I was an avid participant in *qin* clubs in Lanzhou, where, alongside the development of my musical skills, I made many like-minded friends. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. A *qin* society in Lanzhou University, 2006

Today the *qin* has practically come to symbolize ancient China, an association exploited in various media. *Qin* performances allow performers and audiences alike to

feel as if they are stepping back into the past. In effect, the *qin* has grown in popularity and visibility to such an extent that few Chinese today would be unfamiliar with it.

Constructing *Qin* Memory

> Traditional *qin* musicians have developed schemes to examine and describe many of the instrument's musical and non-musical details, including features in individual compositions, and their differing but coexisting versions and notated sources; critical responses to the music and programmatic interpretations; distinctive styles of performers and their affiliation with particular regional schools; biographies and histories of *qin* personages and events (LAM, 1993, p.353-54).

An important dimension of revival movements, as noted by Livingston (1999), is the way in which they promote research on the cultural arena being revived. Lind highlights the role this activity has on the selection of information that is made available to revivalists. As we have just seen, research and the dissemination of research findings was one of the central activities of the *qin* societies of the twentieth century. This aspect of the revival has become especially intense over the past decade, and the number of academic publications is continuously increasing. Generally speaking, these works, which draw on ancient documents of all sorts, include: introductions to the instrument, focusing on its history, construction, craftsmanship and repertoire among other themes (ZHANG, 2005; LINDQVIST, 2009; LIN, 2009; YI, 2004, 2005; GUO, 2006); narratives and stories that involve the *qin* in some way, such as biographies of musicians, particularly of those who belonged to the *Mei'an* School, but also stories associated with the instrument's repertoire or mythic narratives about the instrument itself (XIANZHI, 2006); and studies focusing on the music, such as analyses of *qin* tunes (WANG, 2005) or studies of *qin* aesthetics (MIAO, 2006). This material forms the foundation of a "*qin* memory" that is being disseminated within the *qin* revival movement, giving performers the resources to articulate their musical activities to their daily lives and concerns. In this section I will provide an overview of this "memory", but given its vastness I can only present a flavour of the material contained in these documents, highlighting information that is generally known by today's *qin* performers and which they commonly repeat.

Memory in Historical Records

Since the Han were meticulous in recording their history, written documents pertaining to the *qin* are plentiful. These records indicate that the *qin* already existed before the Zhou Dynasty (1500 BC – 255 BC), which Chinese understand as an ancient legendary era. However, like many other traditional instruments, exactly when the first *qin* was built and by whom is unknown, though the folklore that has developed around the instrument often ascribes its invention to one of six ancient Han kings. In the early manuscript known as *Guide to Qin Music (Qin Cao)*, the richest surviving treatise of *qin* scholarship, attributed to Cai Yong (133–192), the *qin* is said to have been invented by Fuxi. Huan Tan, Fu Yi and Ying Shao, authors of other early treatises, claimed that Shennong gave birth to the *qin*. Others early writers have attributed its invention to Yandi, Huangdi, Yao or Shun. Even as the specific names of the figures seen as the first sources of the instrument vary, the objective of the authors is to identify the *qin* with a character capable of embodying the wisdom of the forebears.

In the Zhou Dynasty, the numbers of strings on the *qin* was not fixed, and could vary from five to twenty-seven. The *qin* was used mainly in the royal palace, the playing technique was probably limited to plucking mainly open strings, and it always accompanied singing. *Qin* players were usually professional musicians who performed for royal ceremonies. The number of strings was fixed at seven in the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD), when the instrument became associated with a scholarly class that engaged in the composition of tunes for the instrument and in writing poetry and prose about it. The *Guide to Qin Music (Qin Cao)*, for example, provides commentary on over fifty *qin* compositions and texts of *qin ge* (songs).

The Tang Dynasty (618–907) is an important period in the development of the *qin*. First, the earliest surviving music notation for the instrument, "Secluded Orchid in the *Jie Shi* Mode" (*Jie Shi Diao You Lan*), dates from the Tang Dynasty. It is said that this notation was composed by Ming Qiu (494–590), however, the original manuscript in the *jie shi* mode, which was hand copied in the Tang dynasty, is in Kyoto in Japan. It was also in the Tang Dynasty that abbreviated character tablature was invented, a form of notation attributed to Cao Rou (b. 730), which records fingering, pitch and changes in timbre, but not rhythm.

The Tang Dynasty also marked the appearance of different *qin* schools. Between 713 and 762, there were two main *qin* schools: the *Shen* School and the *Zhu* School. In his treatise, Zhao Yeli (539–639) identified clear difference between the styles of these two schools: *Shen* School members played slowly, while *Zhu* School members played at a faster tempo. *Qin* schools became prosperous in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the most influential being the *Jiang* and the *Zhe* Schools, which flourished in the south eastern portion of the Yangtze River area and the Zhejiang Province, respectively; members of the *Zhe* School usually played solo *qin* compositions while those belonging to the *Jiang* School preferred singing to the accompaniment of the *qin*. Later, several other schools would emerge, including the *Yushan,* the *Guangling,* the *Pucheng,* the *Shu,* the *Zhucheng,* the *Mei'an,* the *Lingnan* and the *Yushan* Schools, all of which are still active to this day.

Before the *qin* revival, this instrument was mostly played by the literati and officials, who created a culture system and controlled the whole society. In the past, *qin* culture was an elite culture, belonging only to an elite minority. Confuscianism placed considerable value upon music education, and to become a literati one had to master six skills: etiquette, music, archery, riding, literature and calligraphy, and maths, arts which were called *Li, Yue, She, Yu, Shu, Shu*). However, not all music was considered proper for the literati to practice or listen to. Music that made one happy, for instance, was banned because, according to the Confucianism, this kind of music could make a person indulge in a life of pleasure and comfort. *Qin* music, on the other hand, has a simple sound and is played slowly, so it would not promote male entertainment. Furthermore, the instrument provided a source of education. An ancient treatise by Tao Qian (365–427), for instance, speaks of a scholar who played a *qin* with no strings. This illustrates how traditional Chinese literati paid more attention to their process of playing and to the environment in which they played than to the sounds they produced. Moreover, the *qin* was always integrated with other forms of tradition culture, such as painting and calligraphy, as for them, to play the *qin* was seen first and foremost as a means of shaping one's moral integrity and an essential part of been a literati.

Memory on Instruments

Qins themselves are also sources of memory. From the earliest known documents onward, *qin* scholars have constructed representations of their instruments' morphology in relation to the physical world, and these understandings continue to be repeated by *qin* players to this day. Some aspects of this morphology have become standard themes in *qin* folklore. For instance, the shape of the *qin*, which is made from two piece of wood, in which the upper board is usually arched upward while the bottom board is flat, is said to stands for the shape of the world, since in ancient China the sky was thought to be round and the earth square. There are thirteen markers on the *qin*, which are called "*hui*", which are made of semiprecious stones, metal, ivory, or mother of pearl, and stand for the twelve moons and one intercalary moon. Using Western measurements, a normal *qin* is around four feet long; however, according to the traditional Chinese system of measurement a *qin* is 3.65 *chi*,[8] which symbolizes the three hundred and sixty five days of the year. The first five strings of the *qin* stand for the five basic elements – wood, fire, soil, gold, and water – which, according to "*wu xing*", the "Five Elements Theory", make up the world. (See Figure 2.) While this understanding of the universe is at odds with contemporary science, almost every *qin* tutor presents the novice with this traditional organological narrative. Clearly, the authors of these tutors do not intend their readers to adopt the ancient understanding of the physical world; rather, by invoking these views they transport the novices back in time to the quasi-mythic era of Chinese antiquity in which the *qin* and its music were at one with the universe.

Figure 2. This picture demonstrates the various shapes a *qin* can take in representing the universe.

[8] The *chi* is a Chinese measurement: 1 *chi* = 1.09 inches.

Just as these ancient narratives are preserved, ancient instruments are also seen to embody memories of the past. In his study of the *qin*, Robert van Guilk (1969) described how Chinese scholars have cultivated the hobby of collecting old instruments, and typically they also strived to preserve the histories of the objects in their collections. At the time of van Guilk's research, the *qin* known as "Spring Thunder" (*chun lei*), because these two characters were carved on its base, was said to be in the hands of Zheng Minzhong, an antiquities expert with special knowledge of ancient *qins*. This *qin*, which dates from the Tang Dynasty (618–907), was made by Lei Wei and is one of the earliest *qins* still in existence. *Qin* scholars claim that the best *qins* ever build were made in the Tang Dynasty and Lei Wei is heralded as the most skilful of the era's instrument makers. Thus, Spring Thunder is seen by many contemporary students of the *qin* as a means of gaining direct access to the great skills developed in ancient China.

The narratives surrounding Spring Thunder center on its trajectory of successive owners. A book called *Qing Mi Cang* said that its first owner was Emperor Huizong of Song (1082–1135). Following the defeat of the Song, Spring Thunder was appropriated by the victors and housed in the royal palace of Jin. Because he loved it so much, the instrument was buried with the Emperor Zhangzong of Jin (1168–1208). Eighteen years later, the Yuan Dynasty was established, and Spring Thunder was reintegrated into the palace treasures and awarded to its chief minister, Yelv Chucai (1190–1244), who stored it away from the royal palace. After Yelv Chucai, Spring Thunder was owned by Wan Song, Yelv Zhu (1221-1285), and Zhao Derun, before it was collected by the royal families during the Ming Dynasty (1638–1644) and the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). During the Republic, it was owned by He Guanwu, Wang Jingwu and Zhang Daqian, all renowned scholars of Chinese culture.

Since antiquity, it has been common for scholars to carve Chinese characters on the bottom of their *qins*, thus recording information about the instrument for future generations. The *qin* known as "*Jiu xiao huan pei*", which means "the heavenly sounds of jade girdle ornaments", for example, is located in the Palace Museum; it was made in the Kaiyuan Period (713–741) during the Tang Dynasty (LIANG 1972:30). In his description of this *qin*, Liang notes: "Inscribed on the back are two poems written by Su Shih (1036–1101 AD) and Huang T'ing–chen (1045–1105 AD). These poems praising the *ch'in* are well known and were written especially for this *ch'in* in the poets' own writing style." Thus, this *qin* has preserved the work of two early Chinese poets. As these examples demonstrate, antique *qins* constitute media for carrying memories of the past. These memories encompass ancient philosophies, cosmologies, historical narratives and aesthetic sensibilities as well as conceptions about music and instrumental ownership.

Memory in Repertoires

Tunes and handbooks for *qin* performance also constitute repositories of memories about the past. Frank Kouwenhoven (2001:46) has estimated that around 3000 pieces of music for the *qin* dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries have survived in written notation. Over the centuries, the instrument's repertoire has grown, to encompass the voices of different dynasties and representations of significant historical periods and events.

Various forms of notation for the *qin* preserve this repertoire for contemporary scholars and performers. Within the around 150 manuscript collections of tablature

notations, a total of around 600 distinct pieces have been identified, given that many of the manuscripts reproduce different versions of the same tunes, often with different names; around 100 of these pieces are still played today (MIN 2003:81). These tunes have been classified in various ways. One of the most common classifications divides them into three groups: 1) representations of landscapes and places, such as "Flowing Water" (*liu shui*), "Clouds Over the River Xiao and Xiang" (*xiao xiang shui yun*),[9] "Geese on the Sandbank" (*ping sha luo yan*) etc; 2) representations of personal experiences and emotions, such as "A Grieved Life in Changmen Palace" (*chang men yuan*),[10] "Memorizing an Old Friend" (*yi gu ren*),[11] "The Three Repetitions on the Yang Guan Pass" (*yang guan san die*);[12] and 3) representations of narratives, most of which are based on historical facts, such as the exploits of Wang Qiang (also known as Wang Zhaojun). According to Cai Liangyu:

> She was selected by the Han royal palace, when a messenger from the Huns came seeking a marriage alliance. Of her own initiative, she volunteered to be married to a Hun. The Emperor Yuandi of the Western Han (49 BC–33 BC) was astonished by her beauty, but when he regretted having allowed her to join the Huns, it was too late. The marriage of Wang Zhao Jun to a Hun established an era of peace and friendship between the Hans and the Huns" (CAI, 2007, p.97).

Wang Qiang's stories were recorded in the official history books, *History of the Han Dynasty* and *Book of the Later Han*. Numerous *qin* pieces are based on these historical records. Just in *Qin Lun*, written by Xie Xiyi, there are seven such tunes. Along with the musical notation, there are annotations to indicate the episodes the music is representing in order to assist players in their interpretations of the girl's feelings as the story progresses, and even today these annotations are included in published versions of the piece. "New Moon in the Year of the Dragon" (*Long Shuo Cao*), for instance, is a tune based on episodes in Qiang's story. It was first published in 1425 in the anthology *Mysterious and Precious Collection of Qin Music* (*Shen Qi Mi Pu*), and subsequently it appeared in numerous other anthologies, such as *Qin Song Notation in the Zhejiang Accent* (before 1491) (*Zhe Yin Shi Zi Qin Pu*), *Guide to Qin Music* (produced between 133–192) (*Qin Cao*), *Qin History* (produced between 1038–1098) (*Qin Shi*), and many other collections.

Qin players generally learn the story linked to a piece as they learn to play it, and in performance, the story is told to the audience before it is played. As Kouwenhowen has noted, "The stories of *qin* lore are a key factor in the process that will turn mere musical (or gymnastic) exercises into a process of spiritual elevation" (Kouwenhowen, 2001, p.46). Moreover, old *qin* handbooks often include quotes from ancient sources mixed with the views and comments of scholars, musicians, and patrons, past and present (Kouwenhoven, 2001). Through *qin* music, then, Wang Qiang and her great historic feats have been remembered for centuries, as have the exploits of other historical Chinese figures.

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[9] See "Clouds Over the River Xiao and Xiang", played by Wu Zhao: http://v.guqu.net/guqinE/15828.html [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

[10] "A Grieved Life in Changmen Palace", played by Dai Xiaolian: http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/7WJSToDcbmQ/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

[11] "Memorizing an Old Friend", played by Wu Zhao: http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/F37Y2rhsMP8/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

[12] "The Three Repetitions on the Yang Guan Pass", played by Li Xiangting: http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/yw2QdC8tADI/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

Qin revivalists today

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the *qin* revival has gained momentum, reaching the whole of the Chinese mainland. A major reason why the *qin* has become so popular has to do with the fact that it is relatively easy to learn to play. The tempo is slow and the finger techniques are simple. Unlike other traditional Chinese instruments, such as the *zheng*,[13] the *erhu*,[14] or the *pipa*,[15] the *qin* tablature uses simplified Chinese characters, making it relatively easy to learn. Within two years a committed learner can generally master the main techniques of the instrument and become familiar with its canonical repertoire. As the revival progressed, participants gained access to the instrument and the cultural memories associated with it. This material was appropriated and interpreted in different ways by different people, according to their own concerns and commitments.

Although researchers have commonly referred to a "*qin* revival", in Lanzhou, as in other parts of China, the people involved in the movement have different levels of commitment to the instrument as well as different objectives and agendas in playing it. This is not unique to the *qin* revival: throughout the world, researchers investigating revival movements have noted how revivalists frequently split into two groups. While the movement may take off, propelled by a core group of revivalists who strive for "authenticity" and a strict preservation of past practice (LIVINGSTON, 1999), soon another group emerges who see the revival as a sphere for creating new styles based on traditional templates (LIND, 2012, p.28). Elizabeth Lucas, for instance, shows how two distinct groups of revivalists emerged in the nativist revival in southern Brazil: the "traditionalists" and the "modernisers", respectively (LUCAS, 2000). The Chinese cultural revivals, however, have now been underway for several decades, such that the *qin* has become a household term. This has led to considerable diversity among revivalists in China, as they strive to link their *qin* activities to their distinct values, ideologies and daily lives. In a manner similar to that noted by Chris Goertzen in relation to the Norwegian folk revivals, in China today "[t]he old, recent, and new [perspectives on the *qin*] coexist in a living museum, in a dynamic equilibrium of diverse trends within a lively, thoughtful, and varied environment" (GOERTZEN, 1997, p.187).

Amateur *qin* players

The vast majority of *qin* players in China today is made up of amateur performers who have taken up the instrument as a hobby; they play for their own entertainment. The main attraction of the instrument for this cohort is that it is relatively easy to learn to play. The instrument's sound is soft, and players often speak of the relaxing effect it has on them. Although it may be easy to play, the *qin* invites players to engage with Chinese history and literature, expanding their cultural horizons. Thus, the nature of the instrument means that *qin* hobbyists are predominantly adults, and an increasing number of women are taking it up, despite the fact that traditionally it was seen as a male instrument. Today the *qin* has all but lost any gender association, and men and women can play together and learn from male or female teachers.

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[13] The *zheng* is a Chinese plucked zither, which usually has 21 strings and bridges.
[14] The *erhu* is a Chinese two-stringed fiddle.
[15] The *pipa* is a four-stringed Chinese musical instrument.

Many hobbyists are between the ages of 45 and 55, who grew up during the Cultural Revolution in relative poverty and limited music educational opportunities, but now, having benefitted from the recent Chinese economic development, they are able to take up a hobby. For many middle-aged women, the *qin* clubs have also become contexts for meeting people and expanding their social circle. My students Tang, Du and Jing, for instance, all took up the *qin* late in life. In accordance with the family planning policy, they only had one child each, and they are now grown and independent. The women have free time as well as disposable income, allowing them to turn their attention to learning a new and elegant skill. Tang was a teacher in a corporation school, but after the factory closed, she worked as a sales-woman in a private enterprise for ten years before setting up her own business. As the business is prospering, she has a bit of spare time. Du's husband is a businessman, so after she lost her job she decided to stay home and care for her family, which she has done for the past twenty years. Recently she met the requirement of the National Social Security Fund, which has given her some money of her own. Jing, who worked up until her retirement at age 50, now receives a pension.

Many amateurs had limited knowledge about the instrument before they begin their training. Thus, those whom I taught were usually happy to learn according to "modern" methods, which is also how I was taught the instrument. My students begin by learning basic finger technique and then proceed to simple tunes, which may include pieces from non-Chinese repertoires. We use western notation for the rhythm and tradition tablature for the melody and finger technique, but other teachers use western staff notion (see Figure 3). I encourage the students to listen to recordings and watch videos of professional performers, and to perfect their musical skills through extensive practice. Furthermore, I direct them toward handbooks on the instrument so that they can acquire the lore with which it is associated. As they develop, many hobbyist become quite knowledgeable about the instrument. Many become advocates of the *qin*, and take on the mission of preserving and propagating the instrument. Indeed, they demonstrate pride in their performance, and are often delighted to show their abilities and knowledge to the public.

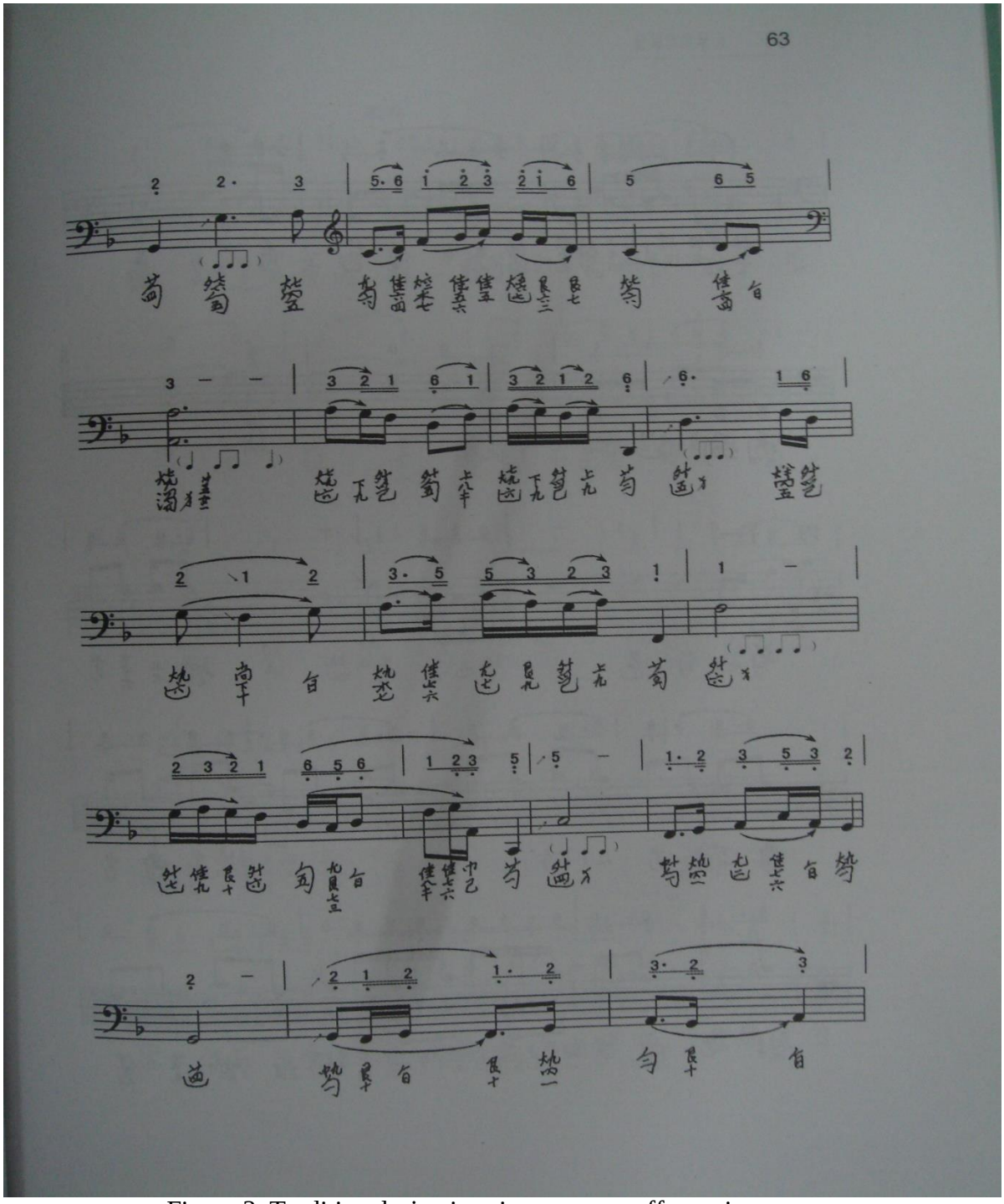

Figure 3. Traditional *qin* piece in western staff notation.

For instance, one day Jie, one of my friends, asked me to help her prepare a talk she would be giving her classmates at a workshop to introduce her instrument. Alongside this group workshop, her classmates were taking individual lessons on different instruments, and they were each instructed to prepare a short talk on their respective instruments for the group. I suggested some books on *qin* culture to her, and encouraged her to tell stories about different tunes. Weeks later, she told me that her talk had been very successful, as both her teacher and her classmates praised her for her knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. This experience became a milestone

in her *qin* playing: through it, she realized how the acquisition of traditional knowledge can be a source of respect in contemporary China. Indeed, she was encouraged by this experience to engage in further research on the *qin*, ultimately redefining her relation to the instrument. Du had already begun developing other traditional hobbies before taking up the *qin*, as she had come to feel that Chinese people should engage in Chinese traditional arts. For Du, who was developing the skill of traditional *qin* notation, her playing and her calligraphy combined to give her the sense of serenity she associated with ancient China.

There are, however, some amateur players who take up the *qin* as a consequence of their strong background in and commitment to Chinese traditional culture. Given that ancient treatises indicate that the *qin* was an indispensable element of the ancient Chinese scholar, these people aim to cultivate the *qin* in conjunction with other forms of ancient Chinese knowledge systems, in many cases even placing the *qin* in a secondary position to the broader objective of preserving traditional Chinese culture more generally. The *qin*, then, complements their engagement with such traditional activities as Chinese opera, painting, calligraphy, seal cutting, *taiji quan* (shadow-boxing) among other arts, as well as tea-drinking, the intense reading of Chinese literature, history, philosophy and religious text (especially those of Buddhist and Taoist scholars), the use of traditional Chinese medical practices, and the furnishing of their homes with mahogany in the traditional classic style. In effect, these amateurs and not just concerned with preserving the instrument and its repertoires, but of experiencing the millennial Chinese way of life.

Within this ideological frame, however, individual performers create their own ways of integrating their understanding of authentic practice to the circumstances of their current lives. Mr Tan, for instance, who ran a traditional Chinese medical hospital in Lanzhou, invited me to become his wife's *qin* teacher, as he felt it would be more appropriate for her to be taught by another woman. As I had no previous experience in teaching the *qin* at the time, I was reluctant to accept the offer. However, Mr Tan made it clear that he and his wife were less concerned in becoming proficient performers than they were in using the instrument as a vehicle to gain access to Chinese traditional culture. As Mrs Tan put it: "We don't need strict musical training; we appreciate traditional culture, and we are more interested in the culture surrounding the *qin* that you can teach us than in the music itself." As this example demonstrates, the Tans aimed to preserve a traditional attitude toward the *qin*, viewing it as a means of transporting themselves to a bygone era of serenity and moral integrity.

Mr and Mrs Xie, a couple who work at the Gansu Academy of Social Science, also strived to use the *qin* as a means of enacting their imaginings of ancient China. Mr Xie has studied Chinese traditional philosophy for over twenty years, and is very knowledgeable about Buddhism and other aspects of Chinese culture. I was employed to teach his wife the *qin*, but I had to adapt my techniques to her traditionalist orientations. Rather than follow modern methods of learning, Mrs Xie wanted to begin by learning a fairly challenging traditional piece, *Ping Sha Luo Yan*,[16] because it depicts a traditional scene involving wild geese on a beach; by learning to play the piece, she hoped to experience the freedom of the geese which the traditional treatises claim *qin* performance is meant to promote. Before Mrs Xie would agree to learn any piece, she and her husband would first scrutinize its description in traditional texts and consider the theme it was meant to embody. Mrs Xie refused to learn *Yang Guan San*

[16] *Ping Sha Luo Yan*, played by Gong Yi: http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/wTppTT4Bc9g/

Die, a tune in which friends say goodbye to one another, for fear the tune would promote sadness when played.

As these examples demonstrate, amateur *qin* players engage with traditional Chinese culture in diverse ways. Among amateurs, the *qin* and its repertoire have been adapted to modern orientations to leisure, that is, to a sphere of activity that is independent of work in which one engages as a means of enhancing one's life experience. Many *qin* performers turned to the *qin* as little more than an enjoyable hobby, but some of them found the activity so rewarding that they became very committed to the instrument, ultimately transforming themselves into its advocates, and their engagement came to be seen as a means of disseminating knowledge about Chinese traditional culture. For others playing the *qin* is understood as a means of experiencing the wisdom and philosophical truths of the past. Here the adaptation of the *qin* to contemporary life is linked to a conception of authenticity that privileges the functionality of the instrument as a source of personal enrichment through the images of the past it can invoke.

Professional *qin* players

Alongside the world of amateur *qin* revivalists, a range of professional spheres have also emerged. Today the *qin* can be studied in many music departments in Chinese universities as well as conservatories and music schools, preparing professional performers and music/*qin* teachers. While there is an especially high demand for places in many university subjects, there is less demand for places in music programs, so some young people with weaker grades are opting to study music in order to acquire higher-level qualifications. Some *qin* students only started playing the instruments a few years before entering university, choosing it over other instruments as they felt they could achieve an acceptable level of performance in time for the entrance examination.

Shuo is currently a third year *qin* student at the Northwest University for Nationalities, the only university in Gansu province with a *qin* program. She studied the piano for two years when she was a child, and chose the bass as her second instrument in university. When I asked her why she had chosen to take up the *qin*, she stated: "I studied in No. 27 Middle School in Lanzhou, which is not a key middle school with a high college acceptance rate. When I was in Grade Two, many of my classmates took regular professional art training classes; their aim was to focus on conservatories, academies of fine arts and physical education institutes. I had only average grades, but I was aware that only the top students in each class made it into university and passed the entrance examinations. My parents and I worried about this, but it was too late to resume piano studies. As I have some musical abilities, we chose an instrument for which there would be less competition. Among the 200 or so students applying for music degrees, I was the only one who had applied to study the *qin* in our university. The only demanding thing I had to do was pass the general knowledge test. Most of my classmates didn't pursue this strategy, and weren't able to attend university. So, I am lucky."

With its establishment in teaching programs, professional *qin* practitioners have developed orientations to the instrument that are more coherent with a modern-day notion of "art", viewing it primarily as a self-contained expressive form to be cultivated for its aesthetic potential. Staged performances of the *qin* by professionals and skilled amateurs are common (see Figure 4). This has instigated the development of new techniques for the *qin* as well new compositions involving the *qin* based on

contemporary aesthetic ideas. Initially composers used the *qin* as a symbolic reference to evoke the past, as in "Spring Wind" (*Chun feng*)[17] by Gong Yi and Xu Guohua, composed in 1982, a song that diverges from traditional practices in both musical form, structure and modal interchange. Actually this song was composed according to new aesthetic ideas about music in modern times. This use of the *qin* can also be found in some Chinese popular musics, such as "Ritual of Apotheosis" (*Feng Shan Ji*), composed in 2007 by a rock band called The Tang Dynasty. At the very beginning of the piece, the *qin* is featured to invoke an ancient ritual environment.[18]

Other composers have written specifically for the *qin*, often introducing themes that reference China and or traditional Chinese culture, linking their practice to the national heritage even as they reposition it within the contemporary context. This, for instance, can be noted in the work of by Li Xiangting, who uses the *qin* to describe the poetry of the Tang Dynasty and Chinese song poems. He has already produced albums of this kind of music, like "Tang Ren Shi Yi", which contains ten short songs based on poetry from the Tang Dynasty.[19]

Figure 4. A small concert of amateurs and professional *qin* players, Lanzhou, 2007

Some young performers have developed contemporary ways of playing traditional pieces. Given that the old Chinese tablature systems did not indicate rhythm, some young players have used pop music grooves in their renditions of the old manuscripts, creating pieces that sound both old and modern. For example, the China Central Television National Music Competition is one of the most prestigious

[17] Listen to "Spring Wind": http://www.tudou.com/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]
[18] Listen to "Ritual of Apotheosis", played by Tang Dynasty: http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/A4BTycYejn8/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]
[19] Listen to "Gu Fan Yuan Ying Bi Kong Jin": http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/LW1yMmVNXY8/ [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

music competitions in China. In 2009, a band called Guapeng, from the Jilin College of Arts, participated in the competition playing a recomposed version of a traditional tune called *Jiukuang Zai* (Feigned Drunkness).[20] Their rendition, which was performed in a jazz style, made it to the semi-finals, indicating that there is a growing acceptance of such innovations (ZHOU, 2009:48). Similarly, the group known as The Swamp is a post-rock music band established in 2003 in the Guangzhou region. In 2006, after the group's lead player, Hai Liang, bought a *qin*, the band began to integrate it into their music. In 2008, they introduced their new style on stage and the tune was well received. Later, in May 2010, the band undertook a nation-wide tour of ten cities, which they called "Qin", and released an album called "The star of Canglang" (*Cang Lang Xing)*.[21]

The integration of the *qin* into popular music has led to the development of a new kind of *qin* – the electric *qin*. The acoustic *qin* is very soft-sounding and therefore can only be played on its own. The electric *qin* can be loud, allowing the instrument to be used within a pop music band. Further developments have been taking place within the digital media; since 2002, for instance, Chen Changlin has been using the computer to play *qin* music in a mode he refers to as MIDI *qin*.[22]

A 'New Memory' and the Construction of National Identity

No doubt, the *qin* revival in Mainland China is linked to the emergence and growth of national identity, sentiments fuelled by the end of the Cultural Revolution which sought to eradicate traditional Chinese culture, but also it also aimed to rescue Chinese culture from the onslaught of western culture and values. For over two thousand years this seven-string zither has had a central place among Chinese scholars. "Its abundant repertory exhibits a wide variety of melodies and formal structures; its numerous notated and verbal sources register a long history and a self-contained system of theories" (LAM, 1993:353). When confronted by the instrument today, memories of the past grandeur of ancient China are brought to mind. The very shape and component parts of the instrument proclaim a traditional Chinese way of thinking: 365 days in 13-month year; a round sky and square earth; the five elements that constitute the world. Specific instruments memorialize and commemorate historical figures, including wise and able emperors, scholars and philosophers, and their trajectories across the centuries can the etched in their wood. The gold and jade inlay on some instruments recall the riches of the past. The repertoires of the instrument recount historical events and also portray notions of the ideal sentiments sought by the ancestors. In taking up the *qin* today, revivalists tap into this past and find means of re-imagining Chinese-ness. But the way in which this past is articulated to contemporary Chinese life can take numerous forms.

While some amateurs adopt the instrument as a form of leisure, the more they engage with the *qin* the more knowledgeable they become, and many progressively acquire an ever stronger sense of national identity. The playing of the *qin* affords

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[20] *"Jiukuang Zai",* played by Guapeng: http://space.tv.cctv.com/video/VIDE1250598853351881 [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

[21] Listen to a piece from the album: http://play.baidu.com/?__m=mboxCtrl.playSong&__a=5608612&__o=/search||songListIcon&fr=ps||www.baidu.com#loaded [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

[22] Listen to Chen Changlin play the *qin*: http://www.people.com.cn/GB/kejiao/42/154/20021025/850609.html [accessed 10 Dec 2013]

them a feeling of self-worth for preserving an ancient national tradition. Other amateurs become greatly committed to their instrument and its embodiment of the Chinese heritage that they strive to disseminate their knowledge to family and friends. There are also amateurs who embrace the *qin* as a means of furthering their already existing sense of national identity. Among them there are those who, instead of dedicating themselves to the acquisition of performance competence, are drawn to the instrument in order to further a life-style dedicated to Chinese culture that encompasses a range of arts and practices; even though actually playing the *qin* may be of secondary importance, it contributes toward their full experience of Chinese-ness.

Professional musicians have also created ways of repositioning the *qin* within nationalist agendas. While some traditional professional *qin* performers may play traditional repertoires and use traditional notation systems, which they studiously strive to preserve, they operate within modern conceptions of Art as a presentational medium (TURINO, 2008). They play not for themselves, but to an attentive audience who will judge them on their performance competence. We have also seen how some composers have integrated the *qin* into their works; others have composed specifically for the instrument. These works are part of an effort to create contemporary Chinese Art music repertoires for traditional instruments, whilst also to provide new music for the legions of young performers emerging from China's various music institutions.

The *qin* is also finding space within Chinese popular music, in which jazz, rock, pop, rap and countless other popular rhythms are being etched to traditional Chinese repertoires and sounds in an imagining that links the ancient past to China's globalized present. The memories repositioned here construct a place for the *qin* that can resonate with Chinese youth, linking them to cosmopolitan aesthetics within a global geopolitics of disparate nations.

From an instrument that had become almost obsolete in the mid twentieth century, the *qin* has now become integrated into everyday Chinese society (SHI, 2011, p.133). Indeed it could be said that the memories linked to the *qin* today articulate the very diversity of contemporary China, in which the place of the past is being collectively negotiated in the search for the future – a future of diverse imaginings which is also coherent with the very complexity of China's pasts.

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